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Performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation: A systematic literature review and future research agenda

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ABSTRACT

Despite extensive research into the standardization versus adaptation of marketing programs, processes, and strategies, findings regarding its impact on performance remain mixed and inconclusive. The fragmented picture of the performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation may be a result of the preponderance and variety of conceptual and methodological considerations included in prior studies. To facilitate further advancement of the field, this study adopts a theory–context–characteristics–methodology (TCCM) framework to (1) systematically review literature related to the performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation and (2) outline a comprehensive agenda for future research. The systematic review reveals the need for new, dynamic theoretical perspectives (*theory*); it also identifies research gaps related to emerging markets, (digital) services (*context*), individual marketing mix elements, and customer-related performance outcomes (*characteristics*). Finally, we suggest several methodological remedies and best practices (*methodology*) that can help enhance the validity of continued findings in this domain.

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, many firms compete at a global scale. Large multinational corporations (MNCs), small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and young new international ventures, from both developed and developing countries, generate major shares of their revenues beyond the borders of their home markets (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015; Kumar, Singh, Purkayastha, Popli, & Gaur, 2019; Narula, Asmussen, Chi, & Kundu, 2019). Global market integration—a trend fueled by "worldwide investment and production strategies, standardization of manufacturing techniques, emergence of global media and the Internet, growing urbanization, rapid increase in education and literacy levels, and expansion of world travel and migration" (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010, p. 18)—has moved questions about the standardization of marketing activities across different countries or regions to center stage for marketing theory and practice (Özsomer, Batra, Chattopadhyay, & ter Hofstede, 2012; Tan & Sousa, 2013; Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003).

Proponents of standardized marketing practices with regard to the product offering, promotional mix, and price and distribution strategy argue that they enhance a firm's performance (Özsomer & Simonin, 2004), i.e., the economic outcomes resulting from the interplay among a firm's resources, strategies, and environment (Combs, Crook, & Shook, 2005). Standardized programs and processes enable firms to capitalize on economies of scale in production, marketing, and R&D (Levitt, 1983; Yip, 1995); shorten the time to market for new product innovations (Neff, 1999); and exploit promising products, ideas, and practices in multiple markets (Maljers, 1992; Özsomer & Prussia, 2000), all of which should increase their overall efficiency and profitability.

However, the real-world performance consequences of marketing standardization remain controversial. Predictions of the "homogenization of markets" (Levitt, 1983) and the emergence of "global consumers" who express uniform needs and wants (Jain, 1989) have not been fully realized in modern markets. Contemporary marketplaces, spanning multiple countries and continents, continue to differ substantially in economic, political, legal, cultural, competitive, and infrastructural conditions, as well as in terms of local consumers' needs and wants. These cross-national differences suggest that firms may need to adapt their marketing activities to better appeal to local consumer tastes and

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preferences and/or to comply with local laws and regulations (Westjohn & Magnusson, 2017) to achieve their consumer- and product-market-related goals (e.g., satisfaction, sales, market share).

Unfortunately, existing findings on the impact of marketing standardization or adaptation—which should not be considered "in isolation from each other, but as the two ends of the same continuum" (Griffith, Lee, Yeo, & Calantone, 2014, p. 311)—on firm performance remain mixed and inconclusive, offering evidence of positive (e.g., Alashban, Hayes, Zinkhan, & Balazs, 2002; Zou & Cavusgil, 2002), non-significant (e.g., Chung, 2003; Samiee & Roth, 1992), and conditional (e.g., Katsikeas, Samiee, & Theodosiou, 2006; Samiee & Chirapanda, 2019) relationships, which also might be nonlinear (e.g., Sousa & Novello, 2014). This fragmented picture seemingly results from the many and varied conceptual and methodological considerations that provide the foundation for extant studies (Samiee & Chirapanda, 2019). It poses a challenge to marketing theory and practice though, in that it is difficult to draw generalizable conclusions from such diverse knowledge and, consequently, provide reliable guidance to international marketing researchers and practitioners.

Against this background, this study seeks to advance the field in two ways. First, we undertake a systematic review of literature related to the link between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance. Several prior studies also attempt to consolidate extant knowledge on the marketing standardization/adaptation–performance link, but these efforts have limited foci. For example, some research prioritizes quantifying the performance implications of marketing standardization/adaptation, using *meta*-analytical approaches based on effect sizes (Tan & Sousa, 2013), *p*-values (Leonidou, Katsikeas, & Samiee, 2002), or vote counts (Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003). Such studies do not give detailed accounts of the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of field. Among studies that instead focus on theory, we find few insights into the empirical foundations of the field (Ryans, Griffith, & White, 2003), such as research contexts (Schmid & Kotulla, 2011) or methods (Birnik & Bowman, 2007). Furthermore, none of these reviews includes contributions since 2010, which account for about one-third of all relevant articles on this topic. The incomplete views provided by these prior reviews are problematic though; the theories, constructs, and methods employed determine the validity of the related findings and might be root causes of documented inconsistencies. Our up-to-date, holistic review of theoretical *and* empirical foundations of research related to the link between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance seeks to plug this gap in research.

Second, building on the insights gained from the systematic review, we outline a comprehensive research agenda. The review reveals that the field lacks strong theoretical underpinnings and relies on a few (static) theories, used rather loosely as mere backgrounds or frames. Studies instead need to adopt multiple, complementary theories that can account for both internal and external conditions, as well as dynamic theories that reflect the process-based nature of marketing standardization/adaptation in increasingly dynamic market environments. With regard to empirical foundations, we observe a strong focus on MNCs and SMEs from high-income countries that produce consumer (non–)durables and industrial goods. In such contexts, most studies investigate the effects of marketing standardization/adaptation in terms of either the entire marketing mix or individual elements, using measures of product-market and accounting performance. Thus, as we explain, more research is needed related to emerging markets, (digital) services, individual marketing mix elements (and their potentially nonlinear and interactive effects), and customer-related performance outcomes. Moreover, we suggest that researchers should delineate efficiency and effectiveness as two different facets of performance, because each relates differently to marketing standardization/adaptation. Finally, we offer several methodological remedies and best practices to enhance the validity of future findings.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: First, we describe our review approach, which is followed by a general overview of the identified literature. Then, we analyze this body of literature in a systematic manner by assessing the theories, contexts, constructs, and methods that have been used to investigate the relationship between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance. Finally, we discuss key insights from our review and outline an agenda for future research.

2. Review approach

In general, systematic reviews serve to identify, analyze, and synthesize evidence from prior research (Hulland & Houston, 2020; Paul & Rialp Criado, 2020), aiming to provide "a state-of-the-art understanding of the research topic" (Palmatier, Houston, & Hulland, 2018, p. 1) and create "a firm foundation for advancing knowledge and facilitating theory development" (Snyder, 2019, p. 3). Systematic reviews can take various forms: They might employ statistical methods to summarize empirical knowledge about a research topic, as exemplified by *meta*-analyses (e.g., Eisend, 2015; Grewal, Puccinelli, & Monroe, 2018; Leonidou et al., 2002) and bibliometric reviews (e.g., Merigó, Mas-Tur, Roig-Tierno, & Ribeiro-Soriano, 2015; Randhawa, Wilden, & Hohberger, 2016; Samiee, Chabowski, & Hult, 2015); they could focus on a specific substantive domain (e.g., Khamitov, Grégoire, & Suri, 2020; Martin & Murphy, 2017; Snyder, Witell, Gustafsson, Fombelle, & Kristensson, 2016), theory (e.g., Gilal, Zhang, Paul, & Gilal, 2019; Kozlenkova, Samaha, & Palmatier, 2014; Rindfleisch & Heide, 1997), or method (e.g., Schmidt & Bijmolt, 2020; Sorescu, Warren, & Ertekin, 2017; Voorhees, Brady, Calantone, & Ramirez, 2016); or they might assess a field holistically, leveraging widely used theories, contexts, constructs, and methods (e.g., Canabal & White, 2008; Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019; Rosado-Serrano, Paul, & Dikova, 2018). In line with our research objectives, we adopt the latter approach to provide a comprehensive "snapshot" of the status quo of pertinent literature (broader in scope than quantitative effect estimates; Tan & Sousa, 2013), with a view to motivating and guiding theoretical and empirical advances.

To identify relevant literature, we conducted an extensive keyword search in online databases such as EBSCO, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. The keywords included "marketing standardization," "standardization," "marketing adaptation," "adaptation," "global marketing strategy," "international marketing strategy," "performance," "sales," "profit," and "growth." Five criteria guided our article selection. First, similar to recent practices in systematic literature reviews (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019; Randhawa et al., 2016), we limited the search to journals listed in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) with an annual (2018) impact factor of at least 1.0. Second, we restricted the time frame of our search to 1989–2019. We chose 1989 as a starting point, because most work on the link between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance was sparked by pioneering contributions in the late 1980s (Jain, 1989) and early 1990s (Samiee & Roth, 1992). Jain (1989) work in particular, cited about 1,500 times to date (Google Scholar, 2020), marks an important cornerstone. This three-decade span from 1989 to 2019 can provide a comprehensive view of the extant body of knowledge. Third, the articles must focus on marketing standardization/adaptation as an explanatory variable (exogenous or endogenous) and test its effect on performance (i.e., studies that exclusively focus on antecedents of marketing standardization/adaptation are excluded). Fourth, we require the articles to be empirical in nature (Paul & Benito, 2018), such that they report clearly defined constructs, measures, and relationships. Thus, purely conceptual contributions, case studies, and qualitative literature reviews are excluded. Fifth, the articles must investigate marketing standardization/adaptation in an international context (i.e., involving two or more distinct country markets), because domestic contexts (e.g., adaptation within corporate partnerships) involve intrinsically different conceptualizations.

Using these selection criteria, we identified 62 relevant articles published in impactful journals. To ensure the completeness of this pool

Table 1
Publications included in this review.

Journal	No. of articles	%	Articles
Journal of International Marketing	19	27.9	Alashban et al. (2002); Albaum and Tse (2001); Chung (2003); Evans et al. (2008); Gabrielsson et al. (2012); Hultman et al. (2011); Hultman et al. (2009); Lee and Griffith (2019); Magnusson, Westjohn, Semenov, Randrianasolo, and Zdravkovic (2013); Özsomer and Prussia (2000); Samiee and Chirapanda (2019); Schilke et al. (2009); Shi and Gao (2016); Shoham (1999); Shoham et al. (2008); Townsend et al. (2004); Westjohn and Magnusson (2017); Xu et al. (2006); Zeriti, Robson, Spyropoulou, and Leonidou (2014)
International Marketing Review	11	16.2	Asseraf et al. (2019); Chung, Lu Wang, Huang (2012); Griffith et al. (2014); Johnson and Arunthanes (1995); Lado, Martínez-Ros, and Valenzuela (2004); Lee and Griffith (2004); Melewar and Saunders (1998); O'Donnell and Jeong (2000); Pae et al. (2002); Solberg and Durrieu (2008); Zou, Andrus, and Wayne Norvell (1997)
Journal of Global Marketing	6	8.8	Chung and Wang (2007); Kustin (2010); Shoham (1996); Shoham (2003); Robles and Akhter (1997); Waheeduzzaman and Dube (2003);
European Journal of Marketing	5	7.4	Chung (2005); Chung (2009); Lages and Montgomery (2005); O'Cass and Julian (2003); Venaik and Midgley (2019)
Journal of International Business Studies	4	5.9	Dow (2006); Kotabe and Omura (1989); Lages, Jap, and Griffith (2008); Shi et al. (2010)
International Business Review	4	5.9	Busnaina and Woodall (2015); Chung, Rose, et al. (2012); Hollender et al. (2017); Shoham and Albaum (1994)
Journal of Business Research	3	4.4	Calantone et al. (2006); Wu (2011); Leonidou et al. (2002)
Journal of Marketing	3	4.4	Cavusgil and Zou (1994); Samiee and Roth (1992); Zou and Cavusgil (2002)
Journal of Advertising	2	2.9	Okazaki et al. (2006); Roth (1995)
Journal of World Business	2	2.9	Navarro et al. (2010); Sousa and Bradley (2008)
Management International Review	2	2.9	Subramaniam and Hewett (2004); Tan and Sousa (2013)
Academy of Management Journal	1	1.5	Aulakh, Rotate, and Teegen (2000)
International Journal of Research in Marketing	1	1.5	Özsomer and Simonin (2004)
Industrial Marketing Management	1	1.5	Li (2010)
International Small Business Journal	1	1.5	Sousa and Novello (2014)
Journal of Product Innovation Management	1	1.5	Calantone et al. (2004)
Journal of Small Business Management	1	1.5	Sousa et al. (2014)
Strategic Management Journal	1	1.5	Katsikeas et al. (2006)
Total	**68**	**100**	

of literature, we manually checked each journal's issues during the relevant time frame and scrutinized the reference lists of all articles we identified (snowball method). Through these efforts, we identified 6 additional articles[1].

Overall, we thus identified and selected 68 eligible articles, including 65 original studies and 3 *meta*-analyses, published in 18 journals. Table 1 lists the publications and journals; it demonstrates that marketing is the main domain that addresses this topic, such that four journals (*Journal of International Marketing*, *International Marketing Review*, *Journal of Global Marketing*, and *European Journal of Marketing*) published 60% of the papers included in our review. This convergence in the key marketing journals indicates the high relevance and importance of marketing standardization/adaptation to marketing research. Other disciplines (e.g., international business, management, strategy, innovation, entrepreneurship) also attend to the topic, and the presence of this topic across multiple disciplines suggests that the performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation represent an interdisciplinary issue with high relevance to researchers and practitioners. Fig. 1, which plots the number of publications over time, illustrates continuous scholarly interest in this topic, further underscoring the relevance and timeliness of a systematic review.

3. General overview

Fig. 2 contains a simplified overview of extant research into the link between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance. Studies commonly examine the relationships of a single or multiple marketing mix elements, such as product, promotion, price, place, or process, with specific measures of operational or organizational performance. This link is often contextualized by macro- and micro-environmental factors. Such factors might determine the likelihood of adopting marketing standardization/adaptation (according to industrial organization theory; Scherer, 1970); alternatively, they might represent contingencies with which a firm's strategy must align to achieve superior performance (i.e., strategic fit or strategy co-alignment; Anderson & Zeithaml, 1984; Venkatraman, 1989). Furthermore, a firm's organizational learning capabilities and resources could enhance the performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation.

All the investigated studies include measures of marketing standardization/adaptation and performance, and many of them draw on various theories to derive hypotheses regarding their relationships in certain conditions. Yet they also vary in the emphasis they place on each part of their models. Overall, we can distinguish four study foci (Table 2): The first group of studies predominantly focuses on the type and/or extent of marketing standardization/adaptation and highlights potential similarities or differences between individual marketing mix elements (*What* practices are standardized/adapted?). For example, Westjohn and Magnusson (2017) focus on discretionary product adaptations. Another, smaller group of studies instead focuses on the effects of marketing standardization/adaptation on multiple performance dimensions (*What* performance aspects are affected? e.g., Okazaki, Taylor, and Zou's [2006] distinction between financial and strategic performance outcomes of advertising standardization). Then a considerable number of studies focuses on the circumstances in which marketing standardization/adaptation has (un)favorable performance consequences, typically by considering environmental and firm-level moderating variables (*When* do the effects of interest occur? e.g., Schilke, Reimann, and Thomas's [2009] investigation of various firm-level moderators of the relationship between standardization and firm performance). Finally, some studies focus on theory development and the causal mechanisms that underlie the link between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance (*Why* do the effects of interest occur? e.g., Venaik and Midgley's [2019] investigation of fit and equifinality as complementary theories to explain the performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation).

Following the structure of prior systematic literature reviews (Aaltonen, 2020; Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019; Rosado-Serrano et al., 2018; Kahiya, 2018), we divide our analysis into four distinct categories: theory, context, characteristics, and methodology (i.e., TCCM review

[1] These articles were published in the *Journal of Global Marketing* and met the previously defined relevance criteria (despite being published in a non-SSCI–listed journal).

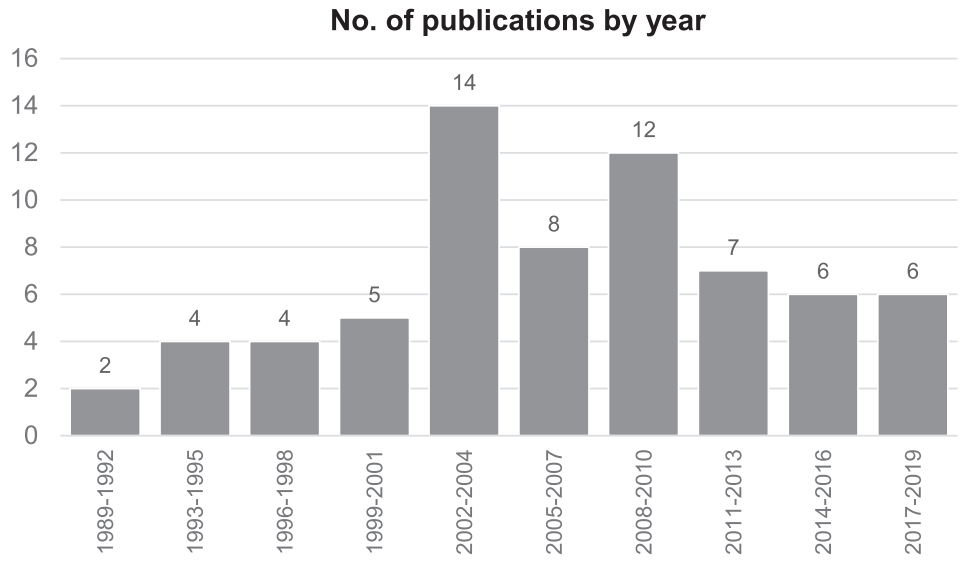

Fig. 1. Number of publications on the marketing standardization/adaptation–performance link, by year.

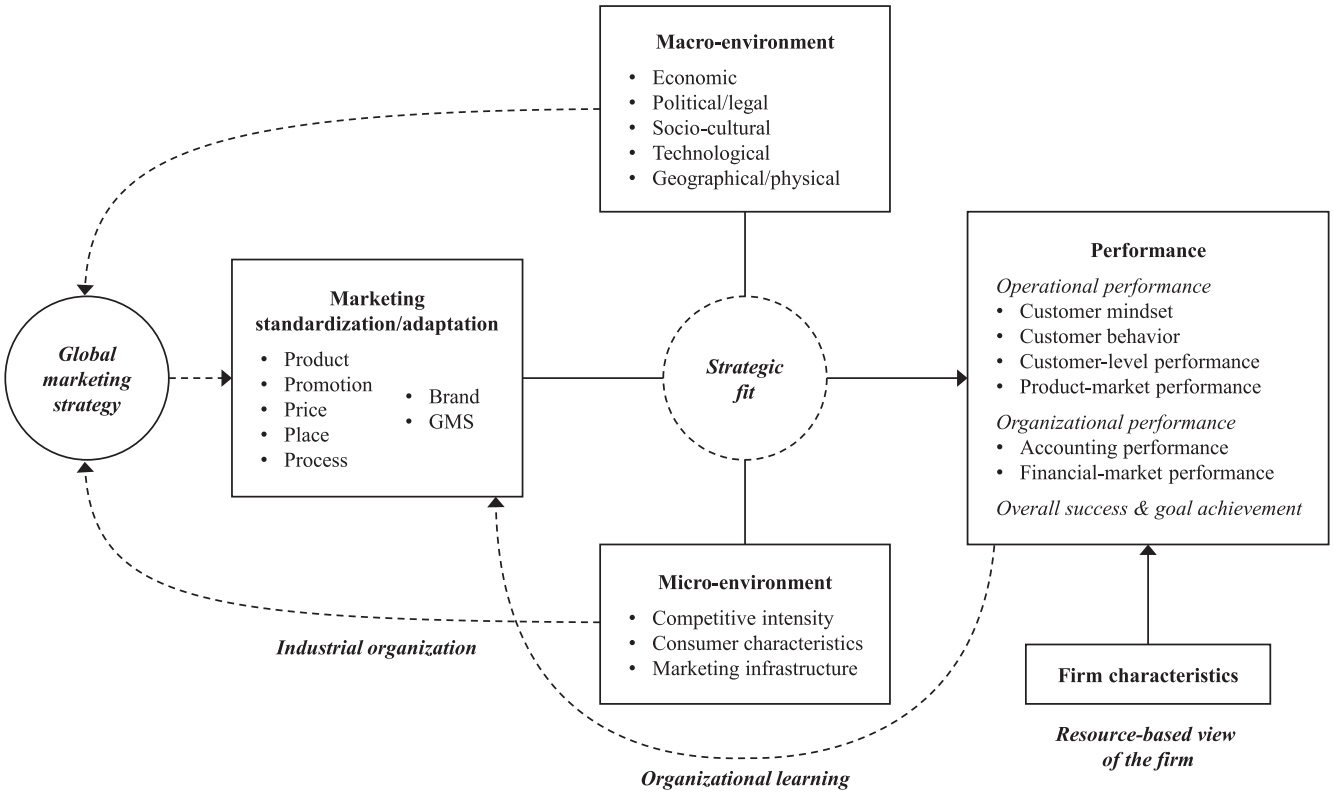

Fig. 2. Overview of research on the marketing standardization/adaptation–performance link.

protocol). Accordingly, this review seeks to address the following questions: What *theories* have been used to explain the impact of marketing standardization/adaptation on performance? In what *contexts* (e.g., countries, industries, firm types) has this relationship been studied? What marketing mix elements and performance dimensions, or *characteristics*, have been investigated? Which *methods* (e.g., data collection mode, analytical method) have been used to examine this relationship? Following our in-depth analysis, we present some key insights and suggest ways forward in terms of theory, context, characteristics, and methodology.

4. Theoretical foundations (*theory*)

The analysis reveals several theories, frameworks, and paradigms—defined as reasoned propositions regarding how a set of relevant constructs relate to one another, with the aim of explaining and/or predicting empirical phenomena (Rudner, 1966)—that researchers have used to explain the concepts and relationships they investigate (Table 3). In terms of the number of theories used, we observe that most studies (76.9%) use a single theory as a guiding framework, while only about one in four (23.1%) draw on multiple theories. Notably, one-third of all original studies (24 papers; 36.9%) do not refer to any specific theory or

Table 2
Foci in studies of the marketing standardization/adaptation–performance link.

Focus	Description	Exemplary references
Marketing mix *(what* input*?)*	Type and extent of marketing standardization/adaptation in terms of the overall marketing program and process or individual components	Cavusgil and Zou (1994); Shoham et al. (2008); Westjohn and Magnusson (2017)
Performance *(what* output*?)*	Influence of standardized/adapted marketing practices on multiple performance aspects	Melewar and Saunders (1998); Okazaki et al. (2006); Pae et al. (2002)
Contingency *(when?)*	Environmental and firm-level factors that moderate the marketing standardization–performance link	Hultman et al. (2011); Samiee and Chirapanda (2019); Schilke et al. (2009)
Causality *(why?)*	Mechanisms explaining the link between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance	Lages et al. (2008); Özsomer and Prussia (2000); Venaik and Midgley (2019)

framework. However, we also note a positive trend: Although every other study (54.5%) published between 1989 and 1999 did not draw on any theory, only one in five studies (18.2%) published since 2010 lacks a guiding theory. We elaborate on the key theories researchers use to ground their studies or to derive conceptual models and associated hypotheses.

4.1. Contingency theory and strategic fit

Contingency theory proposes that no strategy is optimal for all firms without taking into consideration their relevant infrastructure and environmental contexts (Anderson & Zeithaml, 1984; Venkatraman, 1989; Zajac, Kraatz, & Bresser, 2000). The relationship of strategy and performance is conditional; no generally valid list of strategic choices that are suitable for all situations and circumstances can exist (Lages & Montgomery, 2005; Wang, 1996). The starting point for research that relies on this theory is the specification of contingency variables (e.g., at the firm, product, and consumer levels). These variables reflect environmental settings, subsequently analyzed to develop suitable marketing strategies (Lages & Montgomery, 2005; Wang, 1996). Internal and external forces also can function as contingency variables, through which the effectiveness of a particular strategic choice can be realized. Strategy can enhance performance only if the strategy matches existing contingency variables (Katsikeas et al., 2006). In their application of the contingency perspective, Chung, Rose, and Huang (2012) seek to identify which country-, firm-, and consumer-related factors moderate strategy–structure–performance links in export markets.

The paradigm of strategic fit relates closely to contingency theory (Samiee & Chirapanda, 2019), in that it indicates that maintaining a close, consistent link between the firm's strategy and its context is necessary (Venkatraman, 1989). Matching the marketing strategy with its environment should lead to superior results (Lukas, Tan, & Hult, 2001). Here, the emphasis is more on the fit between the environment and strategy, whereas contingency theory starts from the premise that there is no "one-size-fits-all" strategy. For example, Katsikeas et al. (2006) empirically demonstrate that standardization can lead to superior performance if there is fit or coalignment between an MNC's environmental context and its international marketing strategy choice. We thus analyze the prevalence of contingency theory and the strategic fit paradigm in combination. The analysis underscores their increasing prominence, such that they served as theoretical underpinnings of 40.9% of all studies published after 2010.

4.2. Resource-based view of the firm

According to the resource-based view (RBV; Amit & Shoemaker, 1993; Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984), firms have access to strategic resources, which are differentially distributed across firms. The value of a given resource depends on its ability to function as a competitive differentiator (Hunt, 2000), which enables a firm to realize competitive advantages in the market. According to this view, firms should consciously seek to leverage their idiosyncratic resource endowments, which ideally should be valuable, rare, and hard to imitate or substitute (Wernerfelt, 1984). According to Wernerfelt (1984), resources represent the tangible or intangible strengths or weaknesses of the firm, in a semi-permanent sense. Capabilities instead refer to those abilities that are

Table 3
Theories employed to explain the marketing standardization/adaptation–performance link.

Theory	Total	1989–1999	2000–2009	2010–2019	Exemplary studies
Resource-based view	11 (16.9%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (15.6%)	6 (27.3%)	Asseraf et al. (2019); Hollender et al. (2017); Magnusson et al. (2013)
Contingency theory	10 (15.4%)	1 (9.1%)	6 (18.8%)	3 (13.6%)	Aulakh et al. (2000); Chung, Lu Wang, et al. (2012); Lages and Montgomery (2005)
Strategic fit[a]	10 (15.4%)	1 (9.1%)	3 (9.4%)	6 (27.3%)	Katsikeas et al. (2006); Samiee and Chirapanda (2019); Zeriti et al. (2014)
Industrial organization theory	5 (7.7%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (15.6%)	0 (0.0%)	Evans et al. (2008); Özsomer and Simonin (2004); Zou and Cavusgil (2002)
Global marketing strategy framework	3 (4.6%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.1%)	2 (9.1%)	Kustin (2010); Okazaki et al. (2006); Shi et al. (2010)
Other theories[b]	20 (30.8%)	4 (36.4%)	9 (28.1%)	7 (31.8%)	Alashban et al. (2002); Lages et al. (2008); Li (2010)
No (guiding) theory	24 (36.9%)	6 (54.5%)	14 (43.8%)	4 (18.2%)	Busnaina and Woodall (2015); Chung (2003); Johnson and Arunthanes (1995)
No. of studies	**65**	**11**	**32**	**22**	

Notes: Counts of theory applications equal 83, because several studies (23.1%) adopt multiple theoretical perspectives (e.g., Lado et al., 2004; Sousa & Bradley, 2008; Venaik & Midgley, 2019). Relative frequencies (in parentheses) are based on the number of original studies (*meta*-analyses excluded) published during the relevant period.

[a] Unlike studies that use contingency theory as a mere conceptual background, studies belonging to this class include an explicit measure of strategic fit (e.g., residual analysis method).

[b] This class of other theories includes organizational learning theory (Hultman et al., 2011; Lages et al., 2008), relational paradigm (Lado et al., 2004; Sousa & Bradley, 2008), internationalization theory (Evans et al., 2008; Gabrielsson et al., 2012), institutional theory (Hultman et al., 2009; Shoham et al., 2008), dynamic capabilities theory (Asseraf et al., 2019), attention-based view (Lee & Griffith, 2019), threat-rigidity theory (Li, 2010), friction theory (Shoham & Albaum, 1994), strategic flexibility and the theory of friction (Shoham, 1996), bounded rationality theory (Shoham, 1999), cultural fit theory (Shoham et al., 2008), governance value analysis (Griffith et al., 2014), and equifinality theory (Venaik & Midgley, 2019).

specific to firms, which combine various resources to support their achievement of desirable outcomes (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993).

In a marketing standardization/adaptation context, the RBV was first used by Zou and Cavusgil (1992), who highlighted the importance of assessing firms' internal idiosyncratic characteristics (along with the external environment) to determine "the degree of standardization and integration that the firm should seek" (p. 53). By the 2000s, the RBV was being increasingly adopted, and it came to represent one of the most common theoretical backdrops in studies published since 2010 (27.3% of all studies during that period). For example, Asseraf, Lages, and Shoham (2019) use the RBV to develop and test a new conceptualization of international marketing agility, as a resource, which enhances international market performance directly and indirectly through a new product advantage. Similarly, Magnusson and colleagues (2013) conceptualize export managers' cultural intelligence as a resource and examine its moderating role in the relationship between marketing mix adaptation and export performance.

4.3. Industrial organization theory

Industrial organization (IO) theory (e.g., Scherer, 1970; Tirole, 1988), introduced in the 1990 s to the international marketing domain (e.g., Cavusgil & Zou, 1994), seeks to explain the relationship between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance by leveraging the external market environment to identify the firm's strategy drivers. In this view, a firm's performance is determined by its strategy (Hout, Porter, & Rudden, 1982). The main organizing paradigm of IO is the structure–conduct–performance paradigm (e.g., Lipczynski & Wilson, 2001; Scherer & Ross, 1990), which sometimes is referred to as the environment–strategy–performance paradigm (e.g., Child, 1972). This model focuses on how the behavior and performance of firms are related to the structure of the industry/market. According to IO theory, the external market or industry is a determinant force, to which a firm must respond (Conner, 1991). External forces determine the firm's strategy, which then drives its performance. Depending on the market environment, firms might attain a competitive advantage by offering undifferentiated products at low prices or differentiated products at a price premium (Day, 1994; Porter, 1980). Evans, Mavondo, and Bridson (2008) use IO theory to propose a conceptual model of the relationship between psychic distance and organizational performance and find that retail strategy adaptation positively affects performance. Özsomer and Simonin (2004) also use IO theory to explore the antecedents and consequences of marketing program standardization across the subsidiaries of MNCs in developed and emerging markets. Their findings suggest that marketing program standardization relates positively to performance, whereas centralized nonproduct decision making is associated with poorer performance. All studies that applied IO theory were published in the 2000s.

4.4. Global marketing strategy (GMS) framework

The global marketing strategy (GMS) concept is a theoretical construct, defined as "the degree to which a firm globalizes its marketing behaviors in various countries through standardization of the marketing-mix variables, concentration and coordination of marketing activities, and integration of competitive moves across the markets" (Zou & Cavusgil, 2002, pp. 42-43). It derives from both IO theory (Scherer & Ross, 1990) and the RBV (Barney, 1991) and integrates multiple perspectives, including (1) a standardization view of the marketing mix (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994); (2) a configuration–coordination view of the value chain, including implementation of the processes involved in the marketing mix (Craig & Douglas, 2000; Moon & Jain, 2002; Porter, 1986); and (3) an integration view of the global marketing experience, including competitive knowledge (Johansson & Yip, 1994). In conceptualizing the GSM, Zou and Cavusgil (2002) show empirically that it is positively related to a firm's strategic and financial performance. Okazaki, Taylor, and Zou (2006) further investigate the performance implications of advertising standardization, as a component of the original GMS model. Their results suggest that standardized advertising enhances a firm's financial and strategic performance if the external environment and internal resources of the firm are conducive to standardization. Despite its inception in the early 2000 s, the GMS framework has been applied only three times to date.

4.5. Concluding remarks for theory

The key theories in this domain reflect two paradigms related to the sources of a firm's superior performance. That is, some of them emphasize the firm's (internal) resources and capabilities (e.g., manufacturing processes, human resources management), with the prediction that they get deployed "from the *inside out*," which implies a managerial focus on "how best to improve and exploit [them]" (Day, 1994, p. 41). Such an inside-out perspective is reflected in the assumptions that underlie the RBV and organizational learning theory. The other theories focus on the external environment, reflecting the idea that a firm's success depends on its ability to connect its processes to surrounding the environment (e.g., market sensing, customer linking) to be able to compete effectively (Day, 1994). Such an outside-in perspective is evident in contingency theory/strategic fit and IO theory. Yet the two perspectives are not mutually exclusive; rather, they provide complementary lenses. The performance-enhancing effects of marketing standardization/adaptation arguably depend on both internal resources and processes that link them with external conditions and external conditions that enable the exploitation and leveraging of internal idiosyncratic resources and capabilities. Combining the outside-in and inside-out perspectives simultaneously is especially critical in the heterogeneous country environments in which MNCs and some SMEs operate. Thus, multi-theoretical approaches that leverage their complementarities could help explain additional variability in the relationship between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance.

5. Research settings (*context*)

Table 4 summarizes the research settings, including industries, countries, scenarios, and perspectives, investigated in the reviewed literature.

5.1. Industry

More than half of the reviewed studies focus on tangible products, including consumer durables (50.8%), consumer non-durables (49.2%), and industrial products (55.4%). The type of product affects the performance outcomes of standardization; *meta*-analytical evidence affirms that standardization is more appropriate for industrial products than consumer products (Tan & Sousa, 2013). Industrial products (e.g., machinery, materials) primarily provide functional benefits, whereas consumer products (e.g., food, music, fashion) might also serve emotional and symbolic needs, which tend to be culturally grounded. The number of studies that include services (e.g., retailing, banking, insurance, market research) has increased over time, producing 20 studies (30.8%) to date. However, few studies draw systematic comparisons between services and products or focus exclusively on services (e.g., Chung & Wang, 2007; Evans et al., 2008). This finding is problematic, in that the unique characteristics of services (intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity) raise doubts about the generalizability of findings obtained in traditional manufacturing sectors. Unfortunately, almost one-quarter of the studies (16 articles, 24.6%) do not provide sufficiently specific information about the industries/product types they cover, making it difficult to interpret and compare the findings across studies.

Table 4
Industries, countries, and scenarios investigated.

Context	Examples	Total	1989–1999	2000–2009	2010–2019	Exemplary studies
Industry						
Consumer durables	Apparel, household appliances, passenger automobiles, watches	33 (50.8%)	6 (54.5%)	15 (46.9%)	12 (54.5%)	Albaum and Tse (2001); Busnaina and Woodall (2015); Katsikeas et al. (2006); Lado et al. (2004)
Consumer non-durables	Food, beverages, cosmetics & toiletries, health care products	32 (49.2%)	6 (54.5%)	16 (50.0%)	10 (45.5%)	Chung (2009); Pae et al. (2002); Zeriti et al. (2014); Zou and Cavusgil (2002)
Industrial products	Machines, building materials, chemicals, transportation equipment	36 (55.4%)	6 (54.5%)	16 (50.0%)	14 (63.6%)	Hultman et al. (2011); O'Donnell and Jeong (2000); Shi and Gao (2016); Westjohn and Magnusson (2017)
Services	Retailing, banking & insurance, market research, software development	20 (30.8%)	2 (18.2%)	12 (37.5%)	6 (27.3%)	Chung and Wang (2007); Evans et al. (2008); O'Cass and Julian (2003); Shi et al. (2010)
Not specified	n.a. ("multi-industry")	16 (24.6%)	3 (27.3%)	7 (21.9%)	6 (27.3%)	Dow (2006); Lages and Montgomery (2005); Samiee and Chirapanda (2019); Sousa and Novello (2014)
Country[a]						
High income	Japan, Germany, New Zealand, Portugal, US	56 (86.2%)	10 (90.9%)	28 (87.5%)	18 (81.8%)	Chung, Rose, et al. (2012); Evans et al. (2008); Okazaki et al. (2006); Roth (1995)
Upper-middle income	Brazil, China, Mexico, Thailand, Turkey	6 (9.2%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (9.4%)	3 (13.6%)	Aulakh et al. (2000); Li (2010); Özsomer and Simonin (2004); Samiee and Chirapanda (2019)
Lower-middle income	Colombia	1 (1.5%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	Zou et al. (1997)
Low income	(none)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	(none)
Not reported	(none)	3 (4.6%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.3%)	1 (4.5%)	Shi and Gao (2016); Xu et al. (2006); Zou and Cavusgil (2002)
Scenario[b]						
Home-host	Similarities/differences between focal foreign market(s) and home/domestic market	41 (64.1%)	7 (63.6%)	19 (59.4%)	15 (71.4%)	Hultman et al. (2011); Sousa and Bradley (2008); Westjohn and Magnusson (2017); Zeriti et al. (2014)
Intermarket	Similarities/differences between multiple foreign markets (or general international strategy)	25 (39.1%)	4 (36.4%)	14 (43.8%)	7 (33.3%)	Alashban et al. (2002); Lee and Griffith (2019); Schilke et al. (2009); Townsend et al. (2004)
Perspective						
MNCs' regional or global head-offices		11 (16.9%)	3 (27.3%)	5 (15.6%)	3 (13.6%)	Kustin (2010); Lee and Griffith (2019); Xu et al. (2006); Zou and Cavusgil (2002)
MNCs' local subsidiaries		8 (12.3%)	1 (9.1%)	6 (18.8%)	1 (4.5%)	Katsikeas et al. (2006); Özsomer and Prussia (2000); Subramaniam and Hewett (2004); Venaik and Midgley (2019)
Exporting firms/business units		33 (50.8%)	7 (63.6%)	14 (43.8%)	12 (54.5%)	Albaum and Tse (2001); Dow (2006); Hultman et al. (2011); Shoham (1996)
Mixed or undefined firm types		11 (16.9%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (18.8%)	5 (22.7%)	Asseraf et al. (2019); Chung (2003, 2005); Hollender et al. (2017)
Consumers		2 (3.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (4.5%)	Busnaina and Woodall (2015); Pae et al. (2002)
No. of studies		**65**	**11**	**32**	**22**	

Notes: Relative frequencies (in parentheses) are based on the number of original studies (*meta*-analyses excluded) published during the relevant period.
[a] Classification based on the origin of the focal companies (i.e., MNC or SME headquarters).
[b] Excluding Busnaina & Woodall, 2015 (inconsistent scenario).

5.2. Country

To identify the countries investigated in prior literature, we use The World Bank (2020a) official country classification, which distinguishes four groups of countries according to per capita national income: high-, upper-middle, lower-middle, and low-income countries. For this classification, we use each country's income level in the year the corresponding article was published (because classification thresholds are annually updated). The results indicate that most articles (86.2%) focus on high-income countries, such as Japan, Germany, the United States, Portugal, and New Zealand. Limited research attention centers on upper-middle (9.2%) and lower-middle (1.5%) income countries, and no study in our sample considers low-income countries. This lack of research in middle and lower income countries is concerning, in the face of continuing calls for tests of the generalizability of existing findings and the need for new insights specific to companies from lower income countries (Burgess & Steenkamp, 2006). We observe a slight increase in studies set in upper-middle income countries (e.g., Brazil, Russia, India, China); the most recent study conducted in any low or lower-middle income country was carried out in 1997. Given the recent increase of MNCs, coming from emerging markets (see Chattopadhyay, Batra, & Özsomer, 2012), and the fact that these countries host many exporting firms that operate at regional or even global scales, these under-researched countries constitute suitable units of analysis. The performance impact of marketing adaptation and the types of adaptation needed to enhance performance in lower (-middle) income countries promise interesting results. This research void may reflect, at least partially, the greater efforts required to collect data in emerging markets and in lower (-middle) income country environments.

5.3. Scenario

Two types of scenarios reflect firms' marketing standardization/adaptation efforts. The first, a home–host scenario, implies that the firm decides to standardize or adapt its product/service when transferring it from its home country to a foreign host country (Chung, Rose, et al., 2012). This scenario typically focuses on a specific foreign venture (e.g., exporting, foreign subsidiary), using the firm's home country as a reference market. About two-thirds of the studies (64.1%) in our sample address this scenario. In contrast, an intermarket scenario refers to a firm's decision to standardize or adapt marketing activities when transferring a product/service from one foreign host country to another host country (Chung, Rose, et al., 2012). That is, this scenario focuses on the extent of marketing standardization/adaptation across multiple foreign markets, irrespective of the firm's marketing activities at home (it also is referred to as a cross-market scenario). Just less than one-third

of our studies (39.1%) feature such a scenario.

Only two studies (Chung, 2003; Chung, Rose, et al., 2012) investigate the performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation across both scenarios. For example, Chung, Rose, et al. (2012) collect data among Australasian firms operating in greater China by asking managers to compare their home market with the most important host market in terms of revenues (e.g., China; *home–host scenario*), as well as the latter host market with their second most important host market (e.g., Taiwan; *intermarket scenario*). Their results indicate possible differences in the likelihood of success of marketing adaptation. In particular, they find a so-called immigrant effect only in the cross-market scenario, not in the home–host scenario.

It is noteworthy that studies employing a home–host or intermarket scenario tend to differ in their level of aggregation. With their focus on a single venture in a specific foreign market, home–host scenario studies can operationalize the degrees of similarity/difference between the focal country pair using manifold variables (e.g., economic, regulatory, sociocultural, technological environment; Hultman, Robson, & Katsikeas, 2009). But intermarket scenario studies tend to capture a firm's general strategic orientation toward standardized/adapted practices in multiple (potentially not explicitly defined) markets. Consequently, they often exhibit a headquarter-centric perspective and seek to measure the firm's marketing activities at a higher level of aggregation (e.g., Xu, Cavusgil, & White, 2006).

5.4. Perspective

Many studies (50.8%) investigate the performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation from the perspective of the exporting firm or business unit (Zou & Cavusgil, 2002). About one-third of the studies we review (29.2%) involve MNCs and take the view of either a regional or global head office (57.9% of these studies; e.g., Katsikeas et al., 2006) or an individual subsidiary in the host markets (42.1%; e.g., Özsomer & Simonin, 2004). Other studies (16.9%) use a mixed perspective, collecting data from various types of firms (e.g., exporting units, MNC subsidiaries, joint ventures, franchises; Hollender, Zapkau, & Schwens, 2017; Chung, 2003), or else they provide vague information about the exact firm type (e.g., "operating internationally," Wu, 2011; "marketing products internationally," Alashban, Hayes, Zinkhan, & Balazs, 2002). This imprecision is problematic, considering the substantial differences among these firm types in terms of the strategies and decision-making processes they use, which in turn likely influence the performance consequences of their marketing standardization/adaptation.

Only two studies (3.1%; Busnaina & Woodall, 2015; Pae, Samiee, & Tai, 2002) take a consumer perspective, which is surprising. The impact of marketing standardization/adaptation on consumer-related performance outcomes is far from trivial. Standardization might be desirable, as a signal that reduces consumers' information costs and risk perceptions (e.g., consistent quality standards of a global fast-food chain; Özsomer & Altaras, 2008). But it also might lead consumers to perceive products/services as mass produced, inauthentic, or dismissive of local needs and wants (Mandler, 2019). To date, the extent to which consumers can judge the actual degree of standardization across markets is unclear, as are the contextual factors that might determine their attitudinal and behavioral responses to standardized/adapted marketing programs (Mandler, 2019).

5.5. Concluding remarks for context

This review reveals the remarkable variety of contexts in which the link between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance has been studied. In the past three decades, both consumer and industrial products have received substantial attention. Although studies include service categories, few of them focus exclusively on the standardization/adaptation of services. Furthermore, the vast majority of studies involve high and middle income countries, despite recurring calls for more research in lower (lower -middle) income contexts. Thus, prior literature lacks relevant insights into the effectiveness of marketing standardization/adaptation in low and lower-middle income markets, where adaptation may be needed the most. In terms of the considered scenarios and perspectives, extant research sheds a lot of light on the focal link between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance, from various angles, with strong contributions from exporting (typically examining home–host scenarios) and global strategy (typically examining intermarket scenarios from a headquarter or subsidiary perspective) research domains.

6. Constructs and relationships (*characteristics*)

6.1. Marketing mix elements

To assess marketing mix elements, we coded all studies to reflect which elements (i.e., product, price, promotion, place, and process) they tapped into at the construct or item level. For this coding procedure, we extended the scheme to include additional elements (brand, service, and global) to accommodate the study domains available. As Table 5 summarizes, the studies (1) cover the entire marketing program (i.e., product, promotion, price, and place) and process, (2) capture multiple marketing mix elements separately or in combination (but do not cover the entire mix), or (3) focus exclusively on a single marketing mix element.

In particular, 41.2% of all studies (28 original and *meta*-analyses) encompass the entire marketing mix, of which 13 studies (19.1%) also include process standardization. For example, Katsikeas et al. (2006) investigate the performance consequences of marketing strategy standardization/adaptation for subsidiaries of U.S., Japanese, and German MNCs operating in the United Kingdom. With a strategic fit framework, they find that marketing standardization leads to superior performance overall, provided it is coaligned with certain contextual factors. Beyond this exemplary, original study, the *meta*-analyses in our sample (Leonidou et al., 2002; Shoham, 2003; Tan & Sousa, 2013) all adopt a holistic perspective on the entire marketing mix (Shoham, 2003, also covers the process element).

Among the studies (23.5%) that focus on multiple marketing mix elements, either separately (as independent variables) or in combination (as multiple indicators of a higher-order construct or interacting variables), Cavusgil and Zou (1994) investigate the performance consequences of product and promotion adaptations in an exporting context. The authors find that, though product adaptation has a positive effect on export marketing performance, promotion adaptation has a negative effect. Similarly, Cheung (2005) finds that product standardization is positively related to market share, but is negatively correlated with profitability. Price standardization, by contrast, is positively related to profitability. Westjohn and Magnusson (2017) investigate the effects of discretionary marketing adaptation on export performance, measuring it as a second-order construct composed of the product, promotion, and place marketing mix elements. Aggregating the marketing mix elements in such way, the authors demonstrate that discretionary marketing adaptation has a positive effect on export performance.

About one-third of the sample (35.3%) include a single marketing mix element (or process). For example, Calantone, Cavusgil, Schmidt, and Shin (2004) develop a model of the product adaptation process and find that product adaptation is strongly correlated with export-market profitability, both for U.S. and for South Korean firms. Hultman et al. (2009) find no direct effect of product adaptation on export performance though, and demonstrate that the performance-enhancing effect of product adaptation can only be observed if it "is fitted to relevant macro-, micro-, and internal environment conditions" (p. 17). Focusing on the antecedents and consequences of advertising standardization (i.e., promotion), Okazaki et al. (2006) find that it positively affects a firm's financial and strategic performance, through increased advertising

Table 5
Marketing mix elements investigated.

Study	Product	Promotion	Price	Place	Process	Brand	Global
Marketing program and process							
Chung (2003)	x	x	x	x	x		
Chung (2005)	x	x	x	x	x		
Chung and Wang (2007)	x	x	x	x	x		
Chung, Rose, et al. (2012)	x	x	x	x	x		
Kustin (2010)	x	x	x	x	x		
Shoham (2003)[a]	x	x	x	x	x		
Shoham and Albaum (1994)	x	x	x	x	x		
Venaik and Midgley (2019)	x	x	x	x	x		
Evans et al. (2008)	x	x	x	x	x		
Lee and Griffith (2019)	x	x	x	x	x		
Shi et al. (2010)	x	x	x	x	x		
Shoham (1996)	x	x	x	x	x		
Zou et al. (1997)	x	x	x	x	x		
Marketing program (4 Ps)							
Busnaina and Woodall (2015)	x	x	x	x			
Chung, Lu Wang, et al. (2012)	x	x	x	x			
Katsikeas et al. (2006)	x	x	x	x			
Lages et al. (2008)	x	x	x	x			
Leonidou et al. (2002)[a]	x	x	x	x			
Magnusson et al. (2013)	x	x	x	x			
Navarro et al. (2010)	x	x	x	x			
Özsomer and Prussia (2000)	x	x	x	x			
Özsomer and Simonin (2004)	x	x	x	x			
Samiee and Chirapanda (2019)	x	x	x	x			
Shoham (1999)	x	x	x	x			
Tan and Sousa (2013)[a]	x	x	x	x			
Waheeduzzaman and Dube (2003)	x	x	x	x			
Wu (2011)	x	x	x	x			
Zeriti et al. (2014)	x	x	x	x			
Multiple marketing mix elements (P, process, or brand)							
Aulakh et al. (2000)	x	x	x			x	
Dow (2006)	x	x		x		x	
Gabrielsson et al. (2012)	x	x		x		x	
Schilke et al. (2009)	x	x		x			
Westjohn and Magnusson (2017)	x	x		x			
Zou and Cavusgil (2002)	x	x		x			
Albaum and Tse (2001)	x	x			x		
Xu et al. (2006)	x	x				x	
Asseraf et al. (2019)	x	x					
Cavusgil and Zou (1994)	x	x					
Chung (2009)	x	x					
O'Cass and Julian (2003)	x	x					
Solberg and Durrieu (2008)	x	x					
Robles and Akhter (1997)	x	x					
Lado et al. (2004)	x		x				
Lee and Griffith (2004)	x		x				
Single marketing mix elements (P, process, or brand)							
Calantone et al. (2004)	x						
Calantone et al. (2006)	x						
Hollender et al. (2017)	x						
Hultman et al. (2009)	x						
Johnson and Arunthanes (1995)	x						
Kotabe and Omura (1989)	x						
Li (2010)	x						
Subramaniam and Hewett (2004)	x						
Townsend et al. (2004)	x						
Hultman et al. (2011)		x					
Okazaki et al. (2006)		x					
Pae et al. (2002)		x					
Lages and Montgomery (2005)			x				
Sousa and Bradley (2008)			x				
Sousa and Novello (2014)			x				
Sousa et al. (2014)			x				
Shoham et al. (2008)				x			
Griffith et al. (2014)					x		
Shi and Gao (2016)					x		
Alashban et al. (2002)						x	
Melewar and Saunders (1998)						x	
Roth (1995)						x	
Global approach							
O'Donnell and Jeong (2000)							x
Samiee and Roth (1992)							x
No. of studies	**53**	**45**	**35**	**34**	**16**	**7**	**2**
Total %	**77.9%**	**66.2%**	**51.5%**	**50.0%**	**23.5%**	**10.3%**	**2.9%**

[a] Meta-analysis.

effectiveness. Sousa, Lengler, and Martínez-López (2014) consider adapted price elements and uncover an inverted U-shaped relationship between price adaptation and export performance (cf. a previously predicted linear relationship).

Finally, three studies specifically focus on the standardization of brand-related attributes (4.4%), including Alashban et al. (2002), who propose and empirically test a set of antecedents and consequences of a firm's brand-name standardization/adaptation strategy. Regarding the performance consequences, they find that managers associate brand name standardization with greater cost savings and sales volumes. Two studies (2.9%; O'Donnell & Jeong, 2000; Samiee & Roth, 1992) instead adopt a global standardization measure that does not explicitly tap individual marketing mix elements but instead reportedly reflects a "firm's orientation toward global standardization" (Samiee & Roth, 1992, p. 8), with implications for its marketing activities.

6.2. Performance measures

Given the focus of this review, all the sampled studies use measures of performance, as a direct or indirect outcome of marketing standardization/adaptation. However, performance is conceptualized and operationalized in various ways. Applying Katsikeas, Morgan, Leonidou, and Hult (2016) typology, we assess the frequency of (1) operational performance measures, which include customer mindset, customer behavior, customer-level performance, and product-market performance, and (2) organizational performance measures, in the form of accounting performance and financial market performance. As Table 6 shows, most studies consider accounting performance (78.5%), using measures such as sales growth, profitability, and return on investment, or product-market performance (63.1%), with measures like sales volume, market share, and new product sales. Half of the studies (50.8%) tap both types, by using multiple indicators (e.g., Chung, 2005; Solberg & Durrieu, 2008; Townsend, Yeniyurt, Deligonul, & Cavusgil, 2004). This dominant focus on these two types of performance initiated with the inception of the field, with slightly increasing relative shares over time.

About every fifth study (18.5%) includes customer mindset–related variables, such as company familiarity (Melewar & Saunders, 1998), brand attitudes (e.g., Busnaina & Woodall, 2015), or customer satisfaction (e.g., Schilke, Reimann, & Thomas, 2009), as well as variables that capture performance in more general terms, such as perceived overall success (e.g., "perceived success of the venture," Cavusgil & Zou, 1994, p. 10) or goal achievement (e.g., "achievement of strategic objectives," Evans et al., 2008, p. 58). Variables that reflect customer behavior (e.g., acquisition, retention), customer-level performance (e.g., share of wallet, lifetime value), and financial market performance (e.g., investor returns, equity risk) have not been used as frequently; generally, they appear only in combination with other performance measures. For example, Melewar and Saunders (1998) are the only authors to include investment ratings as a dependent variable, along with eight operational and organizational performance measures. Two studies specify independent variables that do not correspond to our classification but reflect their very specific research context (i.e., innovation performance, Wu, 2011; esprit de corps, cooperation, and commitment, Shoham, Brencic, Virant, & Ruvio, 2008). Customer-related performance measures also appear to be a rather recent phenomenon, mostly appearing in studies published after 2010.

Finally, we investigate *how* the various measures assessed performance. Non-comparative (potentially objective) measurements, such as self-reported profitability and/or archival sales volume (Özsomer & Prussia, 2000), appear in 55.4% of all sampled (original) studies; expectation-oriented measurements, such as "Our sales in this market have not met/far exceeded our expectations" (Westjohn & Magnusson, 2017, p. 84), are available in 38.5%; and competition-oriented measurements, such as "much better/worse than [the] main competitors in the export venture market" (Hultman, Katsikeas, & Robson, 2011, p. 36) inform 33.8% of them. Only two studies (3.1%) ask respondents directly to estimate the effect of interest (e.g., "[The company's branding strategy has] greatly lowered/increased costs," Alashban et al., 2002, p. 34).

Table 6
Performance measures used.

Variable(s)	Total	1989–1999	2000–2009	2010–2019
Operational performance				
Customer mindset	12 (18.5%)	1 (9.1%)	6 (18.8%)	5 (22.7%)
Customer behavior	7 (10.8%)	1 (9.1%)	2 (6.3%)	4 (18.2%)
Customer-level performance	2 (3.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (9.1%)
Product-market performance	41 (63.1%)	7 (63.6%)	18 (56.3%)	16 (72.7%)
Organizational performance				
Accounting performance	51 (78.5%)	9 (81.8%)	24 (75.0%)	18 (81.8%)
Financial-market performance	1 (1.5%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Overall success, goal achievement, & satisfaction	15 (23.1%)	3 (27.3%)	7 (21.9%)	5 (22.7%)
Other	3 (4.6%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (4.5%)
No. of studies	**65**	**11**	**32**	**22**

Notes: Relative frequencies (in parentheses) are based on the number of original studies (*meta*-analyses excluded) published during the relevant period.

6.3. Model specifications

Beyond these insights regarding the typically considered marketing mix elements and performance dimensions, a review of the tested model specifications helps clarify how marketing researchers conceptualize the relationship between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance. Table 7 summarizes which classes of variables tend to be specified as independent, dependent, mediating, or moderating variables. We coded them at the item level; for example, a composite measure of environmental differences that taps economic, political/legal, and cultural subdimensions would be assigned to multiple variable classes. Furthermore, we excluded *meta*-analytical studies from this analysis, because they reflect summaries of model specifications in original studies, so including them would lead us to count some variables more than once.

Overall, the results suggest that prior research typically specifies marketing standardization/adaptation as (1) an exogenous construct that directly or indirectly affects performance, (2) an endogenous construct that mediates the effects of certain variables on performance (including antecedents), or (3) an exogenous construct that moderates the effects of certain variables on performance. This latter use is less common.

6.3.1. Independent variables

Many studies anticipate that marketing standardization/adaptation directly or indirectly affects performance, as an independent variable. Other firm-level variables also are used as independent variables together with marketing standardization/adaptation, or else are presented as its antecedents, such as market strategies (e.g., cost leadership, differentiation; 21.5%); variables related to the planning, implementation, and control of firm strategies (e.g., process management; 23.1%); managers' (international) experience, competence, and commitment (26.2%); product (category) characteristics (20.0%); and firm size (e.g., number of employees, total sales) or (prior) performance (e.g., market share; jointly 12.3%).

Other frequently examined independent variables reflect the macro- or micro-environment, often serving as individual or joint determinants of the firm's strategy, which includes its marketing standardization/

Table 7
Independent, mediating, and moderating variables.

Variable(s)	No. of studies	Relative frequency
Independent variables		
Macro-environment		
Economic	15	23.1%
Political/legal	18	27.7%
Socio-cultural	15	23.1%
Technological	7	10.8%
Geographical/physical	2	3.1%
Micro-environment		
Competitive intensity	20	30.8%
Consumer characteristics	20	30.8%
Marketing infrastructure	13	20.0%
Firm-level		
Marketing standardization/adaptation	26	40.0%
Other strategies (e.g., cost leadership, differentiation)	14	21.5%
Process management	15	23.1%
Experience, competence, & commitment	17	26.2%
Firm size & performance	8	12.3%
Product (category) characteristics	13	20.0%
Other variables	10	15.4%
Mediating variables		
Marketing standardization/adaptation	35	53.8%
Other strategies (e.g., competitive strategies)	4	6.2%
Process management	6	9.2%
Effectiveness, performance, & competitive advantages	5	7.7%
Other variables	4	6.2%
No mediator	24	36.9%
Moderating variables		
Macro-environment	7	10.8%
Micro-environment	6	9.2%
Firm-level		
Marketing standardization/adaptation	4	6.2%
Process management	4	6.2%
Experience (incl. cultural intelligence)	7	10.8%
Product characteristics	4	6.2%
Other	2	3.1%
No moderator	44	67.7%

Notes: Relative frequencies are based on 65 original studies (*meta*-analyses excluded).

adaptation. The most common macro-environmental variables relate to economic (23.1%), political or legal (27.7%), and socio-cultural (23.1%) characteristics, whether of the firm's home or host market. Technological (10.8%) and geographical/physical (3.1%) market characteristics are less frequently considered. In terms of micro-environmental variables, the most commonly used are those related to the competitive intensity (e.g., number of competitors; 30.8%), consumer characteristics (e.g., changing preferences; 30.8%), and marketing infrastructure (20.0%; e.g., advertising infrastructure, Okazaki et al., 2006; channel accessibility, O'Cass & Julian, 2003) of the firm's industry. Ten studies include other, more specific variables that do not correspond to the defined classes, such as openness to innovation (Calantone, Kim, Schmidt, & Cavusgil, 2006), transaction-specific investments (Griffith et al., 2014), internal major component sourcing (Kotabe & Omura, 1989), or foreign expansion paths (Gabrielsson, Gabrielsson, & Seppälä, 2012).

6.3.2. Mediating variables

More than half of the studies (53.8%) use the extent of marketing standardization/adaptation as a mediator. Such studies are not exclusively interested in the performance implications of marketing standardization/adaptation but simultaneously explore underlying causes or motivations for such strategies (including the antecedents we noted in the previous section). Another common model specification does not involve any mediating variable, so the focus is on the direct effects of marketing standardization/adaptation on performance. The remaining 19 studies (29.3%) specify various firm-level variables as mediators of the effect of marketing standardization/adaptation on performance, such as other strategies (e.g., marketing differentiation, Dow, 2006; international strategies, Solberg & Durrieu, 2008), process management–related aspects (e.g., centralization of decisions, Özsomer & Simonin, 2004; inter-organizational coordination, Shi, White, Zou, & Cavusgil, 2010), or performance and competitive advantages (e.g., market share; Chung, Rose, et al., 2012; perceived competitive advantages, Navarro, Losada, Ruzo, & Díez, 2010). The share of studies that include these potential mediators of the effects of marketing standardization/adaptation on firm performance has increased consistently over time, from none in 1989–1999 to 36.4% of all studies since 2010.

6.3.3. Moderating variables

Compared with mediators, moderators are less frequently studied in the context of the marketing standardization/adaptation–performance link: 44 of the 65 original studies (67.6%, excluding *meta*-analyses) do not specify any moderating variables. Notably, this determination does not include studies that use a strategic fit/coalignment approach (e.g., Gabrielsson et al., 2012; Katsikeas et al., 2006; Samiee & Chirapanda, 2019), which offers a contingency perspective on the effects of interest but does not represent a moderating variable in a strict sense (i.e., defined as a third variable that affects the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables). Yet the trends suggest increasing inclusion of moderators. Only one in five studies published between 1989 and 2009 included one or more moderators (22.2%), but nearly half of them published after 2010 (54.5%) did. The investigated moderators include macro-environmental (10.8%) and micro-environmental (9.2%) variables, as well as firm-level variables such as managers' international experience or cultural intelligence (10.8%), product characteristics (e.g., product type, B2B vs. B2C focus; 6.2%), process management-related features (e.g., coordination of marketing activities, Schilke et al., 2009; planning, Shoham, 1996; 6.2%), and then a group of others (e.g., country-based interaction orientation, Lee & Griffith, 2019; differentiation vs. cost leadership strategy, Schilke et al., 2009; 3.1%). Few studies consider the extent of marketing standardization/adaptation as a moderator of the effect of any third variable on performance (e.g., Asseraf et al., 2019; Hollender et al., 2017).

6.4. Concluding remarks for characteristics

In terms of the studied constructs and relationships, prior research on the link between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance mostly focuses on the overall marketing program (41.2%) or specific marketing mix elements (jointly, 32.4%), using measures of product-market performance (63.1%), accounting performance (78.5%), or both (50.8%). Customer-related performance outcomes of marketing standardization/adaptation have received considerably less attention (21.5%). Most research investigates direct links between these focal constructs, with third variables conditioning the effects of interest. Half of the studies mention antecedents of marketing standardization/adaptation, but investigations of mechanisms that might mediate its effects on performance remain scarce. This gap is surprising; substantial theorizing predicts different ways that marketing standardization/adaption may enhance performance. Aggregate empirical evidence (e.g., Tan & Sousa, 2013) even points to its differential effects on various performance aspects (financial vs. strategic), underscoring the notion that different processes are at play.

7. Research approach (*methodology*)

7.1. Research methods

Table 8 summarizes the methods used by the reviewed studies. Among these 68 studies, 65 are original studies, and 9 of them employed multiple methods to test their hypotheses. Three *meta*-analysis studies

Table 8
Methods used to study the marketing standardization/adaptation-performance link.

Method	No. of studies	%	Exemplary studies
Regression analysis[a]	27	39.7	Aulakh et al. (2000); Gabrielsson et al. (2012); Hollender et al. (2017); Hultman et al. (2009); Shoham (1996)
Structural equation modeling (covariance-based; CB-SEM)	24	35.3	Alashban et al. (2002); Evans et al. (2008); Lee and Griffith (2019); Özsomer and Simonin (2004); Townsend et al. (2004)
Structural equation modeling (variance-based; PLS-SEM)	8	11.8	Chung, Rose, et al. (2012); Griffith et al. (2014); Navarro et al. (2010); O'Cass and Julian (2003); Sousa et al. (2014)
(Multivariate) Analysis of (co–)variance	5	7.4	Busnaina and Woodall (2015); Chung, Lu Wang, et al. (2012); Kotabe and Omura (1989); Kustin (2010); Okazaki et al. (2006)
Exploratory factor analysis	4	5.9	Cavusgil and Zou (1994); Chung and Wang (2007); Waheeduzzaman and Dube (2003); Zou et al. (1997)
Meta-analysis	3	4.4	Leonidou et al. (2002); Shoham (2003); Tan and Sousa (2013)
Chi-square test	3	4.4	Melewar and Saunders (1998); Samiee and Roth (1992); Venaik and Midgley (2019)
Other[b]	4	5.9	Pae et al. (2002); Samiee and Chirapanda (2019); Venaik and Midgley (2019)

Notes: The number of studies amounts to 78 because several studies employ multiple methods (e.g., Chung, 2009; Kustin, 2010; Waheeduzzaman & Dube, 2003); relative frequencies are based on 68 studies.
[a] Includes (multinomial) logistic regressions (Busnaina & Woodall, 2015) and seemingly-unrelated regressions (Lado et al., 2004).
[b] Includes t-tests (Pae et al., 2002), archetypal analysis (Venaik & Midgley, 2019), and ideal profile analysis (Samiee & Chirapanda, 2019).

use the empirical results of previous studies. Of the original studies, the most commonly used method is structural equation modeling (SEM) (47.1%), such that 35.3% of studies use covariance-based SEM, and 11.8% use variance-based SEM. Although variance-based SEM is growing in popularity in this field (from its first application in 2003 to 6 studies since 2010), its use is not always warranted: It is appropriate only if researchers engage in exploratory research for theory development or predictive modeling (beyond secondary reasons, such as convenient handling of formative measures; Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). For theory testing and explanatory modeling—the purpose of most studies in this field—covariance-based SEM should remain the method of choice. It tends to outperform the variance-based method with more consistent and accurate estimations, especially if the sample size exceeds 250 (most studies draw on more than 200 observations; see Table 9), even if distributional assumptions are violated (Reinartz, Haenlein, & Henseler, 2009). Regression analysis is also widely adopted in 39.7% of studies for hypothesis testing. Finally, classic multivariate methods, such as (M)AN(C)OVA, factor analysis, and chi-square tests are used significantly less frequently, especially in recent years.

7.2. Data sources

Table 9 summarizes the samples used in the original empirical studies, among which 63 publications investigate marketing standardization/adaptation from a managerial perspective. The typical key informants are managers with decision-making and international responsibilities, such as CEOs, presidents, directors, global account managers, export managers, and international marketing managers. Two studies (Busnaina & Woodall, 2015; Pae et al., 2002) investigate marketing standardization/adaptation from consumers' view. In addition, a few papers do not provide explicit information about the country, context, or key informants.

Table 9
Research design characteristics.

Design element	No. of studies	Relative frequency
Type of sample		
Managers	63	96.9%
Consumers	2	3.1%
Sample size[a]		
1–100	14	21.9%
101–200	23	35.9%
200+	27	42.2%
Response rate[b]		
1–10%	6	9.8%
11–20%	15	24.6%
21–30%	16	26.2%
30%+	24	39.3%

[a] Relative frequencies based on 64 original studies using primary data (excluding *meta*-analyses and studies based on secondary survey data (e.g., Lado et al., 2004).
[b] Relative frequencies based on 61 studies (excluding Cavusgil & Zou, 1994, Lado et al., 2004, Pae et al., 2002, and Westjohn & Magnusson, 2017 due to incomplete reporting or non-applicability).

The sample sizes range from 13 to 687 respondents, and 42.2% of studies include samples with more than 200 respondents. Over time, the field has rejected smaller samples, below 100 (used by every other study during 1989–1999), in favor of larger samples. The reported response rates range from lows of 5% to a maximum of 63.5%, and about two-thirds of the studies achieve response rates that exceed 20%. The response rates for international (managerial) surveys often range between 6% and 16% (Venaik & Midgley, 2019), so these rates are very satisfactory.

Surveys are subject to several potential biases, including non-response, common method variance, and endogeneity issues. Studies of marketing standardization/adaptation might be particularly sensitive to such biases, due to their strong reliance on manager surveys with average response rates and the high likelihood of (self-)selection effects. Table 10 summarizes the remedies that the reviewed studies employed to account for such biases. A substantial majority (76.6%) of the original studies explicitly acknowledge the threat of non-response bias, which results when systematic and meaningful differences exist between respondents and non-respondents (Armstrong & Overton, 1977). Testing for it often involves comparing the characteristics of early and late waves of respondents (60.9%, Armstrong & Overton, 1977) to confirm they do not differ on key variables (e.g., Sousa et al., 2014). However, such comparisons do not allow for meaningful inferences about response generalizability (Hulland, Baumgartner, & Smith, 2018) and thus are insufficient to rule out non-response bias completely. Another popular and more robust approach, applied in 22 studies (34.4%), involves

Table 10
Remedies against non-response and common method bias.

Bias and remedy	No. of studies	Relative frequency
Non-response bias[a]		
Early vs. late respondents	39	60.9%
Respondents vs. non-respondents	22	34.4%
Comparison with secondary data	3	4.7%
Not tested/reported	15	23.4%
Common method bias		
Single factor test	21	32.3%
Marker variable test	9	13.8%
Latent factor test	6	9.2%
Other	4	6.2%
Not tested/reported	34	56.9%

Notes: Relative frequencies are based on 65 studies (excluding *meta*-analyses).
[a] Excluding Pae et al., 2002 (experimental lab study).

comparing responding and nonresponding units (i.e., firms) on key characteristics, such as number of employees, sales volume, or age (e.g., Venaik & Midgley, 2019). Regrettably though, we observe an increase over time in the use of the first, less robust method (from 27.3% in 1989–1999 to 68.2% since 2010) and a concomitant decrease in the use of the second, more robust method (from 45.5% in 1989–1999 to 27.3% since 2010). Overall, 35 studies rely on a single method to assess the threat of non-response bias; only 13 studies use more than one (mostly combining these two approaches).

With regard to common method variance (CMV), defined as "variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures represent" (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003, p. 979), our analysis indicates that 34 (56.9%) of the 65 original studies do not report any tests to assess it. However, we also observe a positive trend: Between 1989 and 1999, only about one in every ten studies (9.1%) reported corresponding tests, but more than three-quarters (77.3%) do in the period since 2010. In terms of ex-post statistical tests for CMV, the most widely used method is Harman's single-factor test (21 of 65 studies, 32.3%), followed by advanced statistical remedies such as marker-variable analyses (9 studies) and latent factor tests (6 studies).

Finally, issues related to endogeneity, which arises when an independent variable correlates with the residual term (Bascle, 2008), appear mostly neglected. Only one, recent study (Hollender et al., 2017) mentions potential endogeneity issues as a limitation. This finding is worrisome. Marketing standardization/adaptation is an endogenous, strategic decision made by a firm's management. If performance is the dependent variable, such endogeneity could create a bias, leading to invalid causal inferences (Zaefarian, Kadile, Henneberg, & Leischnig, 2017). Furthermore, survey-based research is particularly prone to endogeneity issues, because respondents' unobserved self-selection mechanisms may arise in the error term and correlate with the self-reported measures (Heckman, 1979). Acknowledging and employing appropriate statistical actions to address endogeneity is important to identify causal relations between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance outcomes accurately.

7.3. Meta-analytical research

Meta-analyses summarize empirical evidence about a topic by combining quantitative results from prior research, using specific statistical methods (Littell, Corcoran, & Pillai, 2008). The three *meta*-analyses in our sample use two approaches to synthesize existing empirical findings and estimate (average) effect sizes. Leonidou et al. (2002) considers 26 studies in terms of their reported *p*-values. Using reported correlation coefficients instead, Shoham (2003) reviews 17 papers with individual samples, and Tan and Sousa (2013) include 110 independent samples reported in 108 studies. All three *meta*-analyses indicate significant direct effects of marketing standardization/adaptation on performance, yet their findings are not consistent. For example, Leonidou et al. (2002) suggest that marketing adaptations relate positively to (overall) export performance, and Shoham (2003) finds that product and distribution standardization negatively affect export performance, but price and advertising standardization have no impact. In contrast, Tan and Sousa (2013) more comprehensive *meta*-analysis paints a more differentiated picture, in which (1) product standardization has a negative effect on financial but not strategic performance, (2) promotion standardization has a positive effect on both performance types, and (3) distribution standardization has no direct impact on any performance outcome, but it indirectly affects strategic performance through increased price standardization (as do product and promotion standardization).

7.4. Concluding remarks for methodology

This review indicates that regression analysis and SEM (which also accounts for measurement errors) are the predominant analytical methods. To estimate the impact of marketing standardization/adaptation on performance, extant research relies on survey data, which makes it incumbent on researchers to recognize and address the potential biases associated with survey data. Non-response bias has been relatively well-acknowledged, especially in the most recent decade. But even as researchers seem more aware of potential validity threats due to CMV, they have not addressed this type of bias sufficiently. Endogeneity has been virtually ignored. It deserves more attention, to isolate the causal effects of marketing standardization/adaptation on performance outcomes. Although the three *meta*-analytical studies explicitly attempt to aggregate empirical evidence, they still yield mixed results. Furthermore, we note 19 articles that have been published since the most recent *meta*-analytical contribution (i.e., Tan & Sousa, 2013, which includes publications up to 2010), representing approximately one-third of the relevant studies we identify. This evidence strongly suggests the need for an updated *meta*-analysis.

8. General discussion

To advance research on the performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation, this study offers a systematic review of related literature, according to the TCCM review protocol. It suggests that the field lacks strong theoretical foundations, instead relying loosely on a few theories (*theory*). It also focuses mostly on MNCs and SMEs from high-income countries that produce consumer (non–)durables and industrial goods (*context*). Investigations of the impact of standardization/adaptation refer to either the entire marketing program or individual marketing mix elements and their effects on (mostly) product-market and accounting performance (*characteristics*). Finally, this research domain relies heavily on surveys of managers as key informants to collect data, which typically are analyzed using SEM (*methodology*).

Although the goal of our systematic review was to address the *theoretical* and *empirical* foundations of marketing standardization/adaptation and its *relation* to performance, rather than providing a summary of the results, a brief snapshot of what we have learned so far is warranted, to do justice to the accumulated findings. The body of research based on MNCs and their subsidiaries versus the exporting domain provide distinct cumulative results. In the MNC context, when marketing mix standardization is treated as a whole, not separated into its individual elements, it relates positively to overall international performance, economic/financial performance, and strategic performance (Tan & Sousa, 2013). Tan and Sousa (2013) find three times more positive results, relative to negative results, for international performance, double the rate for economic performance, and five times more positives for strategic performance. When addressing individual marketing mix elements, research indicates (1) positive relations of promotion and price standardization with international, economic, and strategic performance; (2) a positive link between distribution standardization and international and strategic (but not economic) performance; but (3) a negative relation between product standardization and financial performance (Schmid & Kotulla, 2011; Tan & Sousa, 2013). With regard to boundary conditions, at the level of individual marketing mix elements, price emerges as a mediator of the relation of product, promotion, and distribution standardization with international performance. Thus, we gain some sense of an inherent causal ordering and important interdependencies and synergies between the individual mix elements.

In the exporting context though, the evidence points in the opposite direction. Product, promotion, distribution, and price adaptations exhibit strong positive associations with overall export performance, irrespective of the type of products or markets involved (Leonidou et al., 2002). Combining the two streams (MNC and exporting contexts) seems to confound the findings, leading to seemingly inconclusive results. With our systematic review though, we advance understanding of the field's

theoretical and empirical foundations, providing a crucial basis for explaining and reconciling the many discrepancies in extant literature. Accordingly, we highlight several areas that deserve attention and corresponding directions for further research.

9. Research directions

In accordance with the structure of the preceding analysis, which reflects the TCCM framework (Paul, Partiasrathy, & Gupta, 2017), we divide our future research suggestions into four segments: new theoretical perspectives (*theory*), new research settings (*context*), new constructs and relationships (*characteristics*), and new data and methods (*methodology*). Table 11 provides a summary of suggested research directions for each area, along with some example research questions.

9.1. New theoretical perspectives

Although 63.1% of the reviewed studies referred to a specific theory, the theories often were used rather loosely, as mere backgrounds or frames, rather than informing the development of specific hypotheses or predictions. Therefore, studies of how marketing standardization/adaptation influences performance appear to lack strong theoretical foundations. This diagnosis resonates with previously expressed concerns that international marketing faces a major challenge in developing strong theoretical underpinnings to guide the systematic accumulation of knowledge and generalizations (Nakata & Huang, 2005).

Furthermore, 44.6% of all studies rely on just three theories: contingency theory/strategic fit, RBV, and IO theory. These theories are undeniably useful in establishing insights about the marketing standardization/adaptation–performance relation, but they also have limitations. First, they come from management and strategy fields, which—unlike marketing's inherent focus on demand-side factors—generally address supply-side factors (Kotabe, 2003). Therefore, continued studies should consider how to apply demand-side (e.g., behavioral) theories to determine the impact of marketing standardization/adaptation on performance from a consumer perspective.

Second, these theories reflect either an inside-out perspective (e.g., RBV) or an outside-in perspective (e.g., contingency theory). For example, by focusing on leveraging idiosyncratic, internal resources and capabilities, the RBV would suggest standardizing marketing across markets, because accumulated marketing experience can be an idiosyncratic resource. In one of the earliest such studies, Zou and Cavusgil (2002) find positive associations between standardized product and promotional mixes and firms' global strategic and financial performance. But contingency theory (Katsikeas et al., 2006) suggests that marketing standardization works best only when customer segments demonstrate common needs across markets. Each theory has merit individually, but when used together, they can complement each other effectively and provide a more thorough assessment. Therefore, we recommend multi-theoretical approaches to the performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation, according to various internal and external conditions. For example, an inside-out perspective arguably might be more suitable to explain efficiency-related effects (e.g., profitability as a percentage of sales, return on investment), but an outside-in perspective could be more suitable to explain effectiveness-related aspects (e.g., market share, customer satisfaction).

Third, these theories often entail static models of the current state of the firm or its environment, at a given point in time. However, as Hanssens, Parsons, and Schultz (2003, p. 139) explain, "customers, channel members, and competitors anticipate or react to a firm's actions, so their adjustment processes are one basis for believing market mechanisms should be dynamic." Dynamic models can overcome the major limitation of static models, namely, the assumption of a constant environment (Hanssens et al., 2003). International business environments and firms have become increasingly dynamic, so new theoretical lenses are needed to account for potential variations in the relevant

Table 11
Future research agenda.

Area	Future research direction	Example
Theory	Dynamic capabilities theory	Does the implementation of a standardized marketing mix reduce the local market orientation of a subsidiary, attenuating customer satisfaction in subsequent periods?
	Organizational learning theory	What is the causal ordering of marketing standardization/adaptation and performance, and what role do feedback loops play?
	7-P framework of international marketing	How can marketing standardization/adaptation be employed to overcome cognitive biases of foreign customers, such as the liability of foreignness and country-of-origin misperceptions?
Context	Emerging markets & consumers at the "bottom of the pyramid"	Which marketing mix elements should global brands standardize/adapt in emerging markets to leverage their global appeal while satisfying local needs?
	Services and digital goods	In which conditions does culture constitute a barrier (or catalyst) for the standardization/adaptation of (digital) services?
	Born-global firms	How do the entrepreneurial mindset and asset parsimony of born-global firms relate to their decision to standardize/adapt their marketing programs?
Characteristics	Individual marketing mix elements (asymmetric, interactive, and non-linear effects)	Does the effectiveness of price standardization depend on distribution standardization?
	Marketing standardization/adaptation and global brand perceptions	To what extent is standardization necessary for establishing global brand perceptions, and at what point do adaptations undermine a brand's perceived globalness?
	Customer-related performance (customer mindset metrics and behavior)	To what extent does marketing standardization have detrimental effects on consumer mindset metrics, which may offset the benefits associated with economies of scale?
	Protectionism, nationalism, and anti-globalization sentiments	What implications does rising protectionism and nationalism have for the effectiveness of marketing standardization/adaptation?
Methodology	Longitudinal data	Collect longitudinal data to test if the contemporaneous relationship between standardized advertising and firm performance remains stable over time.
	Non-response bias testing	Compare respondents with non-respondents, using secondary data or follow-up contacts.
	Common method bias testing	Apply the partial correlation procedure or the latent method factor(s) approach.
	Meta-analysis	Conduct an updated *meta*-analysis that tests alternative model structures, including mediating effects and multiple performance consequences (MASEM).

constructs over time. We suggest two theories and a framework that might be used to gauge the dynamic relationships among marketing standardization/adaptation, the environment, and performance.

9.1.1. Dynamic capabilities theory

This theory highlights a firm's "ability to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly-changing environments" (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). The concept of dynamic capabilities represents a response to the main limitation of the RBV, namely, that it neglects the factors surrounding resources. To bridge those gaps, dynamic capabilities theory offers a process view (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Hunt & Madhavaram, 2020), which is more accommodating of the dynamic relationships among marketing standardization/adaptation, the environment, and performance.

9.1.2. Organizational learning theory

This theory can accommodate dynamism too. Organizational learning involves the process of creating, retaining, and transferring knowledge within an organization (Cyert & March 1963; Huber, 1991; Vera & Crossan, 2004). For example, internationally operating firms arguably should improve over time, as they gain experience. Using learning curves, researchers can show that as the firm produces more of a product or service, it increases its productivity, efficiency, reliability, and/or quality. This concept can also apply to the planning, implementation, and execution of standardized or adapted marketing programs, with corresponding performance improvements over time. For example, a company might learn to standardize or adapt better over time by learning from its mistakes. Similarly, the standardization/adaptation–performance link might grow stronger over time if brand equity accumulates. The direction, magnitude, and dynamic nature of factors that facilitate and promote such effects are yet unclear.

These two dynamic theories (dynamic capabilities and organizational learning) can provide guidance in two important domains: the causal ordering between standardization/adaptation and downstream variables and the stability of the modeled relationships over time (see Fig. 1). For example, by applying these theories, researchers might answer questions like, Is centralized decision making needed to implement a standardized marketing program and enhance performance (Özsomer & Prussia, 2000)? Does the implementation of a standardized marketing mix reduce the local market orientation of a subsidiary, attenuating customer satisfaction in subsequent periods? Can marketing adaptation lead to better performance by encouraging more motivation and involvement by local subsidiary managers? These dynamic theories also support investigations of the implicit time sequence between standardized or adapted elements of the marketing mix. Perhaps the adaptation of positioning and pricing leads to the adaptation of products (ingredients) in subsequent time periods; product adaptations also might affect performance. These questions are crucial from a marketing accountability standpoint (i.e., attribution/causation) and provide fruitful research directions.

With regard to the stability of the modeled relationships over time, a longitudinal version of the relationships in Fig. 1 would better capture both the stable and the dynamic elements of the framework (see also Section 9.4, "New data and methods"). To the best of our knowledge, Özsomer and Prussia (2000) offer the only longitudinal study investigating contemporaneous, cross-lagged, and autoregressive effects of marketing standardization/adaptation on performance. This domain remains in need of models that can account for the important role of time.

9.1.3. 7-P framework of international marketing

The 7-P framework (potential, path, process, pace, pattern, problems, and performance; Paul & Mas, 2019) provides a new lens on the dynamic relationships of marketing standardization/adaptation and performance. It aims to identify mechanisms for creating and capturing capabilities and opportunities, across national borders. Specifically, the problems and performance elements focus on challenges encountered after foreign market entry. In the 7-P framework, problems arise due to cognitive biases, in the form of negative (quality) perceptions that stem from the country of origin (Thomas, Eden, Hitt, & Miller, 2007), the liability of foreignness that induces costs due to a lack of knowledge or experience in a foreign country (Miller, Thomas, Eden, & Hitt, 2008; Thomas, 2006), and resource (capital, managerial talent, technology, brand equity) limitations (Cuervo-Cazurra, Maloney, & Manrakhan, 2007). For example, with limited capital and marketing know-how, the firm could devise a strategy that is insufficiently adapted, leading to its poor positioning in the target market. The performance element also is inherently dynamic, with its emphasis on "learning intensity and research and development," (Paul & Mas, 2019, p. 15) and continuous improvement to ensure long-term success in foreign markets. In response to changing consumer and stakeholder sentiments, the continuous fine-tuning of the level of standardization is needed for effective performance. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many global brands have switched to more locally adapted advertising, to avoid the liability of foreignness and build closer connections with concerned target consumers.

9.2. New research settings

The relevant context (e.g., economic, social, technological) has changed greatly since the first publications pertaining to how standardization/adaptation affects performance. This relationship is likely affected by significant shifts in the environment, such as digital and technological advances, increasing consumer power, and intensified global competition (Katsikeas, Leonidou, & Zeriti, 2019; Yaprak, Xu, & Cavusgil, 2011; Özsomer, 2019). These shifts call for explorations of new research settings, together with theories that can explain and predict the benefits or drawbacks of marketing standardization/adaptation in differentiated settings. The identification of relevant country and industry settings should be guided by the trends that are "revolutionizing" international marketing (Cavusgil & Cavusgil, 2012), such as rising middle classes in emerging markets (Cavusgil, Deligonul, Kardes, & Cavusgil, 2018). Steadily increasing disposable incomes, available to millions of consumers who have never before participated in the global marketplace, should give firms strong incentives to reevaluate and adjust their standardization/adaptation strategies and practices to appeal to these valuable customers. Some segments of affluent urban consumers exhibit tastes and interests similar to those of Western consumers and possess the financial means to afford foreign brands, but emerging middle classes and consumers at the "bottom of the pyramid" require carefully crafted mixes of appropriate amounts of standardization, delivered with the right degree of adaptation. More than 4 billion people live at the bottom of the pyramid, earning less than $2 per day; these vast markets of consumers are brand conscious and also extremely value conscious, by necessity (Prahalad, 2005). Although brands and products might be standardized in terms of ingredients and attributes, to leverage the attractiveness of global brands and positioning, smaller pack sizes (e.g., single-use caches) and alternative (cheaper) packaging should support adapted pricing and distribution tactics. Alternatively, firms might develop low-price variants of their brands but still rely on traditional advertising and distribution channels. Despite the crucial importance of emerging markets for the economic viability of many MNCs and SMEs, the performance implications of standardized/adapted marketing activities in these markets (especially, in low-income countries) have not received much attention yet, as our review clearly indicates.

Another research setting that has received less attention, relative to consumer durables and non-durables or industrial products, pertains to services. Even though services account for more than 65% of the global gross domestic product (The World Bank, 2020b), we lack insights into which service components (e.g., core vs. peripheral, facilitating vs. enhancing) can be standardized across borders or should be adapted to

local market conditions. Conventional wisdom suggests that high-contact services require more careful consideration of which service components to standardize or adapt (i.e., due to the greater role of culture in personal interactions and communication). Yet technological advances in artificial intelligence might call such beliefs into question, by offering greater cross-cultural standardization potential. Research along these lines remains scarce (cf. Davenport, Guha, Grewal, & Bressgott, 2020; Huang & Rust, 2018). Yet digital services, empowered by the proliferation of digital technologies and smart devices, are on the rise (Forrester Research, 2019). Some digital services tend to be highly standardized, but many brands also make adaptations to their products, promotions, pricing, or distribution to ensure their success in foreign markets. For example, Spotify altered its product offering to suit German listeners' preferences (e.g., more audio books); Uber especially emphasizes safety in its communications in Colombia (cf. convenience or cost savings). Digital goods fundamentally differ in their production, communication, pricing, and distribution; the performance outcomes of their marketing standardization/adaptation also likely vary from those for physical goods and deserve attention, especially considering their growing economic and socio-cultural impacts.

Finally, research in the past three decades primarily has focused on MNCs and exporting SMEs. These companies certainly are important actors in international business sectors, but other types of companies also have emerged on the global stage. Born globals (and born digitals; Monaghan, Tippmann, & Coviello, 2019) are young, entrepreneurial business organizations that pursue rapid international expansion soon after their founding (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004). These firms contribute substantially to the economic development of many nations and account for a notable share of export growth worldwide (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015; Zander, McDougall-Covin, & Rose, 2015). Yet born globals by definition differ significantly from MNCs and SMEs, in terms of their managerial mindset and behavior, available resources, and capabilities—all factors that likely affect their proclivity to pursue standardized marketing activities and their success in doing so (Efrat, Gilboa, & Yonatany, 2017; Gabrielsson & Gabrielsson, 2003). Thus, these new business forms represent interesting, relevant contexts for further investigation.

9.3. New constructs and relationships

Most studies have adopted broad perspectives, considering an overall marketing program, or focus on product and promotion standardization/adaptation. Studies of the performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation as it relates to processes (e.g., customer service, market research), distribution (e.g., channel partners), and brands (e.g., brand name, positioning) are rarer. By focusing on individual marketing mix elements, researchers may be able to account better for factors and mechanisms specific to these business functions, which should produce more nuanced, actionable findings. We recommend modeling marketing mix elements individually, to facilitate detection of asymmetric effects, as well as testing for potential interactions among the elements (Tan & Sousa, 2013). For example, the effectiveness of price standardization might depend on distribution standardization, so we need in-depth insights into this interaction, reflecting the recognition that marketing programs are planned and executed in an integrated manner and risk subpar performance outcomes when relevant synergies and complementarities are ignored.

Consider an exemplary brand-related question: Regarding the relationship between marketing standardization and global brands, studies should explore the extent to which standardization is necessary for establishing a global brand perception and at what point adaptations undermine perceived globalness. Recent advances suggest that perceived standardization can hurt global brands (Mandler, 2019), yet consumers' ability to judge a brand's standardization across borders seemingly might be rather limited or segment-specific (e.g., greater among business travelers). This open question is relevant; it implies consideration of the performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation from a consumer perspective, which has been underdeveloped thus far, according to our literature review.

This shortcoming also is reflected in existing performance measures. Many studies measure product-market performance or accounting performance rather than customer mindsets (e.g., brand image, satisfaction), customer behavior (e.g., acquisition and retention), or customer-level performance (e.g., profitability, lifetime value). Expanding the range of performance measures would account better for customer-related effects of marketing standardization/adaptation and also potentially address conflicting effects. For example, marketing standardization might enhance profitability through lower costs, but it could have simultaneously detrimental effects on consumer mindset metrics, due to unfavorable perceptions of mass-produced, inauthentic, or insufficiently tailored brand offerings. Such opposing effects imply difficult trade-offs, and researchers should help managers make them.

Contemporary environmental developments also call for revisiting the benefits and drawbacks of marketing standardization/adaptation. Adaptation is imperative to enter protectionist countries (Westjohn & Magnusson, 2017), and the rising protectionism and nationalism exhibited by consumers in many Western markets is likely to increase demand for marketing practices adapted to local particularities. Offering initial evidence along these lines, Mandler, Bartsch, and Han (2020) find that in Western markets, global brands appear to have lost credibility, whereas brands that embody local values and customs (continue to) benefit from stronger credibility perceptions. Continued studies should investigate the impacts of protectionist, nationalist, and anti-globalization sentiments on the relation between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance.

Finally, we call for research that revisits the nature of the investigated relationships. First, studies might consider and test whether the relationships of interest follow a linear or nonlinear trajectory. For example, Sousa and Novello (2014) identify a non-significant (linear) relationship between price adaptation and export performance but eventually determine that the relationship actually is U-shaped. Similarly, Dow (2006) argues that marketing adaptation increases performance up to a certain point, after which performance starts to decline, implying some optimal level of adaptation. Nonlinearity then could explain some conflicting results in prior literature; perhaps different studies assessed the relevant relationships at different levels of marketing standardization/adaptation (which would imply different slopes). Another option would be to include alternative models that conceptualize marketing standardization/adaptation as a moderator rather than an (exclusive) independent variable. Recent contributions by Hollender et al. (2017) and Lee and Griffith (2019) demonstrate this possibility.

9.4. New data and methods

With a single exception (Özsomer & Prussia, 2000), the studies in our sample investigate marketing standardization/adaptation in a static way, with cross-sectional data. Despite the data collection challenges it entails, the field needs longitudinal research that reveals the causal order and intertemporal stability/variability of the relationship of marketing standardization/adaptation with performance. In particular, researchers should collect data at two or more different times, to distinguish contemporaneous (effects in the same period), cross-lagged (effect of variables in t_1 on different variables in t_2), and autoregressive (effect of a variable in t_1 on itself in t_2) effects. If such investigations reveal stability, it would imply that contemporaneous relationships are likely to persist over additional periods. Thus, we could address questions such as whether the positive contemporaneous relationship between standardized advertising and a firm's financial and strategic performance (Okazaki et al., 2006) remains stable over time. Autoregressive effects instead can identify environmental or strategic momentum, such that standardization/adaptation in the past affects

future levels. A repetitive momentum, or a tendency to repeat previous firm actions (Amburgey & Dacin, 1994), is particularly relevant to test for autoregressive effects. A subsidiary with high levels of adaptation likely adapts more in the future because it knows how to do so, rather than adapting in pursuit of the performance benefits of adaptation. Finally, cross-lagged effects would establish the time lags needed for outcomes to materialize. For example, positive effects of standardization likely take time to emerge, because standardization helps build brand equity. Its contemporaneous relations to performance thus may be negative, but the cross-lagged effects could be positive as consumers and distributors build increasingly strong brand relationships. Feedback loops (downstream variables in t_1 affect different upstream variables in t_2) are another type of cross-lagged effects worthy of investigation. Poor performance in t_1 could lead to greater standardization in t_2 if a head office imposes well-tested marketing programs on subsidiaries or if subsidiary managers adopt standardized programs to avoid making mistakes in their adaptation. Or better performance in t_1 could lead to higher adaptation in subsequent periods, as subsidiaries build confidence and as head-office managers give more decision autonomy to successful managers. Such temporal sequencing of independent, mediating, and dependent variables is at the heart of the Granger causality methodology (Granger, 1969).

Regarding survey research practices, we call for methodological improvements to better account for various sources of biases. Nonresponse bias often gets addressed, but researchers should avoid the "somewhat ritualistic" (Hulland et al., 2018, p. 97) practice of comparing early and late respondents and instead compare respondents with nonrespondents, using secondary data or follow-up contacts. With regard to CMV, despite increasing awareness of the problem, it appears that researchers continue to apply Harman's single-factor test, which has been debunked as non-diagnostic (Hulland et al., 2018). This practice should be replaced with more appropriate tests, such as the partial correlation method (Lindell & Whitney, 2001) or latent method factor method (Williams & Anderson, 1994). Perhaps of greatest concern, our review reveals widespread neglect of endogeneity. To ensure the validity of their findings, researchers must account for potential endogeneity-induced biases by employing appropriate correction methods, such as instrumental variables, lagged independent variables, or step-wise estimation procedures (Zaefarian et al., 2017). The choice of the most appropriate method depends on the research design, as well as the context, data, and underpinning theory.

Finally, this review identifies the need for an updated *meta*-analysis; almost one-third of all relevant studies were published after Tan and Sousa (2013) most recent *meta*-analytic effort. From a methodological standpoint, we encourage studies to use *meta*-analytic structural equation modeling (MASEM), which offers important advantages compared with traditional *meta*-regressions. In particular, MASEM can specify complex model structures that include multiple predictors, mediators, and outcomes (Cheung, 2015), so it provides effect size estimates for both direct *and* indirect effects (Bergh et al., 2016; Cheung & Hong, 2017). Because MASEM also offers model fit information, researchers can assess the adequacy of alternative/competing models. We recommend that continued studies leverage this effective method to explore the dependencies among different (standardized or adapted) marketing mix elements and determine their direct and indirect effects on efficiency- and effectiveness-related performance outcomes simultaneously. Our review of the theoretical and empirical foundations of this research field may inform the design of such *meta*-analyses, which we hope ultimately may establish a timely, consistent basis for understanding the performance consequences of marketing standardization/adaptation.

10. Conclusion

This systematic review suggests that extant research on the relationship between marketing standardization/adaptation and performance lacks strong theoretical foundations, focuses mainly on manufacturing MNCs and SMEs from high-income countries, and heavily relies on survey data to estimate the impact of marketing standardization/adaptation on (mostly) product-market and accounting performance. Based on the findings from our analysis, we present a future research agenda that outlines promising theoretical perspectives (e.g., dynamic capabilities theory, organizational learning theory); discusses phenomena that prompt a need for new contexts (e.g., emerging markets, digital services) and constructs (under-researched marketing mix elements and performance dimensions); calls for revisiting the nature of relevant relationships (e.g., non-linearity, intertemporal variability); and offers best practices to avoid common methodological shortcomings in future studies.

Appendix

List of all papers

1. Alashban et al. (2002)
2. Albaum and Tse (2001)
3. Asseraf et al. (2019)
4. Aulakh et al. (2000)
5. Busnaina and Woodall (2015)
6. Calantone et al. (2004)
7. Calantone et al. (2006)
8. Cavusgil and Zou (1994)
9. Chung (2003)
10. Chung (2005)
11. Chung (2009)
12. Chung and Wang (2007)
13. Chung, Lu Wang, et al. (2012)
14. Chung, Rose, et al. (2012)
15. Dow (2006)
16. Evans et al. (2008)
17. Gabrielsson et al. (2012)
18. Griffith et al. (2014)
19. Hollender et al. (2017)
20. Hultman et al. (2011)
21. Hultman et al. (2009)
22. Johnson and Arunthanes (1995)
23. Katsikeas et al. (2006)
24. Kotabe and Omura (1989)
25. Kustin (2010)
26. Lado et al. (2004)
27. Lages and Montgomery (2005)
28. Lages et al. (2008)
29. Lee and Griffith (2004)
30. Lee and Griffith (2019)
31. Leonidou et al. (2002)
32. Li (2010)
33. Magnusson et al. (2013)
34. Melewar and Saunders (1998)
35. Navarro et al. (2010)
36. O'Donnell and Jeong (2000)
37. O'Cass and Julian (2003)
38. Okazaki et al. (2006)
39. Özsomer and Prussia (2000)
40. Özsomer and Simonin (2004)
41. Pae et al. (2002)
42. Robles and Akhter (1997)
43. Roth (1995)
44. Samiee and Chirapanda (2019)
45. Samiee and Roth (1992)
46. Schilke et al. (2009)
47. Shi and Gao (2016)
48. Shi et al. (2010)

49. Shoham (1996)
50. Shoham (1999)
51. Shoham (2003)
52. Shoham and Albaum (1994)
53. Shoham et al. (2008)
54. Solberg and Durrieu (2008)
55. Sousa and Bradley (2008)
56. Sousa and Novello (2014)
57. Sousa et al. (2014)
58. Subramaniam and Hewett (2004)
59. Tan and Sousa (2013)
60. Townsend et al. (2004)
61. Venaik and Midgley (2019)
62. Waheeduzzaman and Dube (2003)
63. Westjohn and Magnusson (2017)
64. Wu (2011)
65. Xu et al. (2006)
66. Zeriti et al. (2014)
67. Zou and Cavusgil (2002)
68. Zou et al. (1997)

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